

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROYAL MARINES AND NEW ZEALAND

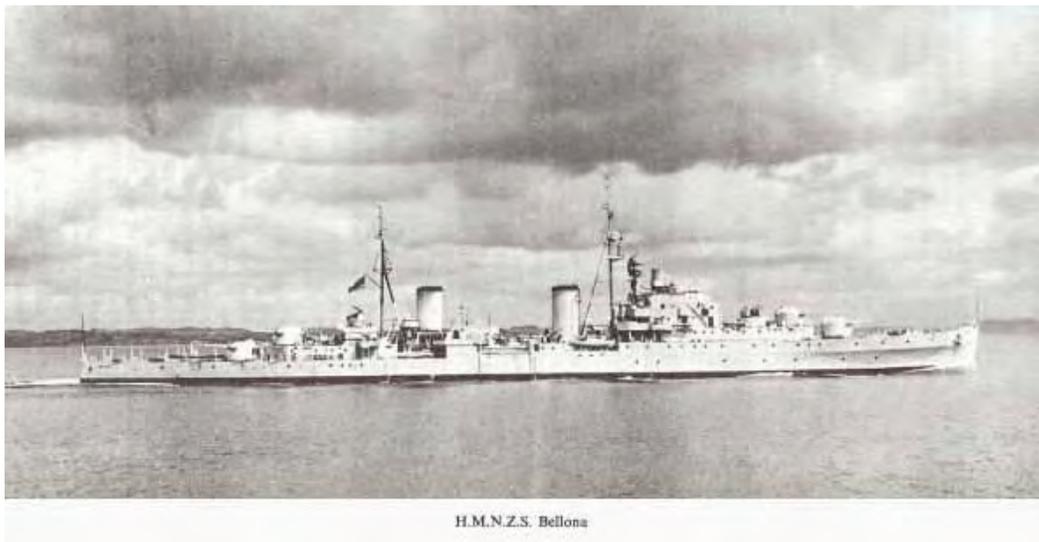
New Zealand in common with most countries of the old British Empire, had a change in course of its history with the landing of men of the Royal Marines (Britain's Sea Soldiers of The Navy's Redcoats). For indeed the early history of the Royal Marine Corps is the History of the Old Empire.

In the month of June 1768, a small R.M. detachment of 9 Marines, 1 Drummer and 1 Corporal, under the command of Sgt. John Edgecombe R.M; drummed out of Stonehouse Barracks, Plymouth (still a R.M. Barracks) and marched down to Plymouth Hoe to the Barbican to join H.M.S. Endeavour (under Capt. Cook). On the 26th August 1768 she sailed for the South Seas, and the Royal Marines began a 3 year commission.

On the 9th November 1769, just east of the Taranganui River the Marines landed for the first time in New Zealand; by Mercury Bay on that same day they presented Arms as the Union Flag was hoisted, the first link in the chain between the Royal Marines and New Zealand was welded. Other detachments followed with Capt. Cook; when Cook fell ill in Hawaii, four Royal Marines fighting off his attackers died with him.

The Royal Marines Detachments of the Resolution and Discovery did their duty in New Zealand waters, and later in the New Zealand Wars R.M. Detachments of no less than 17 ships saw service both afloat and ashore; either as Gunners (Royal Marine Artillery) or as Infantry (Royal Marine Light Infantry). Then came the Fencibles (the Soldier settlers) amongst whom were a large number of time -expiring Marines.

In 1920 with the formation of the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy, Light Cruisers came onto the New Zealand Station. These ships carried detachments of Royal Marines, both the Light Cruisers H.M.S. Dunedin and H.M.S. Diomedes and five detachments while on station, H.M.S. Achilles three detachments, H.M.N.Z.S. Gambia one detachment; last but not least H.M.N.Z.S. Bellona with two detachments.



The 1st in 1946 made up in the main by Royal Marines who had served in H.M.S. Achilles and H.M.S. Leander during the War and had not had the chance of seeing the country they had served. In 1949 these Royal Marines were sad to leave when their tour of duty was up and the relief detachment arrived in Wellington in the Liner Atlantis, under the command of Capt. P.R. Lamkester R.M; who had previously served in the Achilles.

The last detachment (1949 to 1951) carried out their duties in the traditional manner of the Corps; the 3 years passed too quickly..... At the Royal Show in Epsom Show Grounds, Auckland in 1951

they said their farewell to New Zealand by Beating the Retreat; their bearing and drill were the delight to thousands who watched them. Many ex-Royal Marines from all over New Zealand were there, deeply touched as their serving comrades executed the Royal Marine Corps traditional ceremony, in pouring rain, flashing lightning and rolling thunder. The last link was welded, for the chain could never be broken. The Royal Marine Band would see to that, for they continued in New Zealand for another nine years. As would the Royal Marine Association, but above all the many New Zealand families whose very beginning were with those who truly served under two flags, with equal allegiance to both. In the mid 1970's the Royal Marine Association had their own Corps of drums who performed the age old traditions of the Corps at the same high standard, for twenty years with a strong bond to the New Zealand Naval reserve.



A further link with New Zealand is that of the Royal Marine Light Infantry Colours. These were one of the first colours of an Imperial force to be laid up in New Zealand; at St. Mary's church, New Plymouth.

A son of New Zealand, General Sir John Westall, born in Napier, became the Commandant General of the Royal Marines, 1952-53.

Also the grave of ColDare-Dowell, one of the Corps VC (Crimean War) holders, was discovered in Remuera, Auckland, and his award which was thought to have been lost, was personally presented to the Royal Marine Museum in Eastney, Portsmouth.

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